

Castlemaine Naturalist

February 2009

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Reed Warbler at Expedition Pass
Reservoir
photo Noel Young



Dawn Breakfast at Expedition Pass – Jan 10th

Rita Mills

About 10 of us braved a cool summer morning (or revelled in it!). Huddling down behind the reeds and being serenaded(?) by Clamorous Reed Warblers, we enjoyed breakfast and helped celebrate a fiftieth Wedding Anniversary which had followed the birth of a new grandchild only a day or two previously!

Even with all that excitement, there were very few birds on, or around, the reservoir. Certainly few compared with other years when we have gone there. However, the morning was a very pleasant one, and the reflections on the water were worth the trip.

I was intrigued by how a couple of Pacific Black Ducks could hide so completely despite the light shining through the reeds from behind. I only realized I wasn't imagining I'd seen them go into the reeds when a head appeared cautiously from behind the stems and promptly disappeared again, and though I stood there for another two or three minutes, there wasn't even a ripple of the water to betray their continued presence.

The Red Gums were heavily in flower but I didn't even record Red Wattlebirds, which made me wonder if the honey flow is not good this year. Hopefully there will be another Dawn Breakfast next January. They are always enjoyable, and well worth rising early for.

Bird list -

Clamorous Reed Warblers
Eurasian Coot
Grey Currawong
Australian Raven
White throated Treecreeper

Pacific Black Duck
Little Pied Cormorant
Magpie
Superb Blue Wren
Grey Fantail

LOTZ & LOTZA LUVVERLY RAIN

12.12.08

Natalie de Maccus

Never let it be said that the Field Nats can't influence the weather. Without the need to perform a rain dance. All we need to do is organize our December break-up outing for a venue without shelter – read Wombat Reservoir – with a reasonable assumption that the weather would be warm and dry.

On the Friday we had steady rain throughout the duration of the meeting, which necessitated the choice of a more shelter-friendly location for our outing. Some people said cancel, others said find another (preferably closer in case we got caught in heavy rain) location. Finally we settled on Taradale, which came with adequate shelter even though it was right in the town. (When threatened with inundation one can't hold out for the distant location.)

Since Rita Mills came up with the suggestion she was automatically dubbed leader. However, Hans van Gemert (having been a former resident of the area) knew some of the out-of-the-way tracks between Elphinstone and Taradale via Cemetery Road. This eventually brought us out to the Taradale Reservoir. We made a few stops, which didn't yield up a profusion of birds (they being like ourselves wanting shelter) until we came upon a large dam with an abundance of water birds (which don't mind getting wet).

At each stop we added to our plant list, ending up with 13 identifiable species flowering (some sparingly).

<i>Xerochrysum viscosum</i>	Sticky Everlasting
<i>Leptorhynchos tenuifolius</i>	Wiry Buttons
<i>Acacia mitchellii</i>	Mitchell's Wattle
<i>Wahlenbergia</i> sp.	Bluebell
<i>Leucopogon virgatus</i>	Common Beard-heath
<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>	Black Wattle
<i>Hypericum gramineum</i>	Small St John's Wort
<i>Amyema pendula</i>	Drooping Mistletoe
<i>Grevillea alpina</i>	Downy Grevillea
<i>Dillwynia phylocoides</i>	Small-leaf Parrot-pea
<i>Dillwynia sericea</i>	Showy Parrot-pea
<i>Austrostipa mollis</i>	Supple Spear-grass
<i>Lomandra</i> sp.	Mat-rush

When we arrived at our shelter a few young people were there. They told us that they were expecting a group of friends and were settling in for extended celebrations. We decided to give the barbecue a miss and settled for afternoon tea. Wishing the young-uns season's greetings, we departed and left them to their celebrations and the continuing rain, which in itself was cause enough for celebration!

From the January Business meeting

February AGM

A reminder that our first meeting for the year is also our AGM. We will be electing office bearers for the coming year, and as some of our Committee members cannot be expected to continue the role, we urge you to consider joining. Nomination forms are available from the Secretary.

There will also be the matter of formalising our Constitution, as detailed in the December newsletter. This amounts to a vote by the General meeting to adopt the **Statement of Purpose** as set out in both June and December editions of the Castlemaine Naturalist. Members wishing to vote but unable to be present at that meeting can obtain a proxy form from the Secretary, appointing another person or the Chairperson of the meeting to vote on his/her behalf. That form must be returned at least 24 hours before the meeting.

Another excellent reason to be there is to hear renowned naturalist, author and photographer **Trevor Pescott** speak on mammals. Trevor currently heads the Mammal Survey Group associated with the Geelong FNC. They conduct a trapping program and Trevor is compiling an Atlas of species for the Geelong - Otway region. They have acquired some remote automatic cameras to further the studies. Don't miss it.

Jan Hall, president McKenzie's Hill Action and Landcare Group, has requested the club's support in the following matter:

Future implications for Diamond Gully / McKenzie's Hill

- The Castlemaine Residential Strategy (2005) identifies "*the Diamond Gully area as the key residential growth area for Castlemaine*" Developers own 182 acres south of the Pyrenees Highway, bounded by Martin St, Willy Mill Rd and Ranters Gully Rd. To facilitate responsible and orderly development the Council established "*The*

Diamond Gully Structure Plan Reference Group". The Reference Group has been working over many months to provide sustainable guidelines for the developers.

- The McKenzie's Action and Landcare Group has, since inception nearly three years ago, had a vision regarding public open space.
- This vision has been focused on Lushington Bushland Reserve, where we have planted local indigenous plants, weeded and placed nesting boxes.
- With the impending implementation of the developments, we have been revising and expanding our vision. This includes land both inside and outside the Structure Plan area. There is a deal of crown and public land in the area unsuitable for residential use. Some of it has been old landfill areas, others have been old gravel reserves and much of it has been sluiced and tunnelled in the gold mining era. All of it is part of the drainage system which leads down to Campbell's Creek.
- We see this area as providing; (a) areas for conservation, with wildlife corridors linking with Campbell's Creek and the corridors as identified in the *Structure Plan*. (b) Recreation areas with cycle/walking paths linking to the existing C.C. path.
- Some of the land ie old landfills is barren and in need of revegetation, some is weed infested while some has very significant bushland containing big mature trees which are relatively rare in the Diamond Gully area.
- We are preparing to present to council our vision. For this we are seeking support from other like minded groups to further understanding and knowledge of the area and our ideas for the future.

In order that we appreciate the subject more fully your committee has planned for the next excursion on the 14th Feb to be a walk in the area. As it is obviously of importance for us to come to grips with it as soon as possible, we have postponed the visit to Crusoe Reservoir until March.

Roadside clean-ups - KABC

Following the club's objections to more stringent conditions by the KABC, they have come up with a more acceptable procedure, which we can probably agree to. A representative of KABC will talk to all willing participants.

Eucalypts in Autumn. Dorothy Bessant

Seven years I've lived here seventy more
in all yet never before
seen this
this gentle rain of pale gold blossom
falling from a cloudless heaven
falling like snowflakes
drifting through the windless air

settling slowly
settling silently
till at length they lie
whorl upon whorl upon whorl
a galaxy of Van Gogh stars
shining in a sky of leaves.

That I should chance to be
sitting here
on this veranda
in this old cane chair!.

All things come
to those who wait it's said
and this thing
most well-come
is to me
this to see
in autumn
in this
in my seventy-seventh year.

CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB SPEAKER LIST FOR 2009

February 13	TREVOR PESCOTT	Mammals
March 13	RICHARD HUGHES	Wild Country Project
April 3 #	JULIAN HOLLIS	Climate Change from the Geological Point of View
May 8	DAVID HOLLANDS *	Birds
June 12	SIMON KENNEDY	Swift Parrot Research
July 10	GEOFF NEVILL	Threatened Species (Orchids}
August 14	MICHAEL MARMACH	Bogong High Plains
September 11	BETH GOTTF	Wild Food
October 9	ERN PERKINS	Australian Natural History Medallion Presentation
November 13	DR MARY COLE	Mychorizae and Environmental Health

April 10 is Easter Friday

* To be confirmed

Notes from members.

Sunday 14 December.

Common Bronzewings are getting very familiar at Cassinia-Rise. Their dulcet tone "om" has been frequently heard close to the pavilion and disturbance showed them fluttering off. Usually seen at distance in front paddock they appear to have ensconced close to the cubby. Discovered early in the week a female appears to have crashed to death either on the north window or perhaps hit the water tank – turbulent winds in past days relocated sheets iron etc. Saturday 13 a male and two feathery puff ball females had a feed-a-thon around acacia outside bedroom, casually strolling drive and cubby site. Sunday 14 the shrub was decorated with baubles – of five Weebills, who then took turns with the scattering of wrens to mooch the grounds and flutter in the foliage. A Weebill nest reappeared in lower shed, formed in a stack of kitchen ware - which I decided I don't need for a while!

Zoe

Observations

At the December meeting -

- ◆ Natasha Harris – Little Eagle and Rainbow Bee-eaters at Guildford
- ◆ Blue Grass lily flowered this year – Natalie de Maccus
- ◆ Very few birds on the recycled water dams compared to many on freshwater dams at the Golf Course – Debbie Worland
- ◆ George Broadway observed native Cherry trees laden with cherries near Chewton and a Frogmouth family at Farnsworth St.
- ◆ Sweet Bursaria and Magenta Stork's Bills in flower - Rita Mills
- ◆ Grey Thrush and Willy wagtails have second lot of young – Geoff H
- ◆ John Alexander observed a Black Kites' nest and three adult and one juvenile Nankeen Night Heron on the river just north of Newstead.
- ◆ Clover glycine (rare) has been found on private land due for subdivision – Hans van Gemert
- ◆ Denis Hurley – at Merrifield st. 8/12 – 12/12. - Don't know why Grey Currawongs have gone, but since then, Blue wrens and Choughs have returned, Speckled Warblers have two offspring feeding near the house; Brown Goshawk has young, Red browed Finches with five young at the feed tray, Golden Whistler around the house, Striated Pardalotes in the nest box, Spotted Pardalotes nesting under the house (seems to be a good supply of lerps) Crimson Rosellas nesting in the eves, and many other Honeyeaters using the drink tray as the weather gets hotter and my dam is now dry.
- ◆ (January) Prolific flowering of Red Gum this year – Rita
- ◆ Hans van Gemert notes many Red rumped Parrots about.

January at the Harris's

At the water bowl each morning and evening there are often many species at once. When its very hot, the pecking order seems to be relaxed.

Bronzewing	Crested Pigeon	Red Wattlebird
Yellow faced H	White plumed H	Yellow tufted H
New Holland H	Brown headed H	Crimson Rosella
Eastern Rosella	Musk Lorikeet	Blue Wren
White br. Scrubwren	Eastern Shrike-tit	Pardalote
Red browed Finch	Willy Wagtail	Grey Shrike-thrush

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme

February 2009

Fri Feb 13: AGM. Election of Office Bearers and Committee.

Speaker: TREVOR PESCOTT.

Sat Feb 14. Field Trip: Diamond Gully bush.

Fri Mar 13 meeting: RICHARD HUGHES Wild Country Project

Sat Mar 14: Crusoe Reservoir, Kangaroo Flat

Fri April 3* meeting: JULIAN HOLLIS on "Climate Change from the Geological Point of View"

*** Note change of date - April 10 is Easter Friday**

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at Natalies; 65 Johnstone Street, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions for 2009

Ordinary membership: Single \$27, Family \$35

Pensioner or student: Single \$24, Family \$29

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

2009 Committee

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